AIM

THE BULLETIN OF THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT

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HPA GETS MONEY FROM CITY

The Hill Parents Association, which has had virtually no money to wage its fight to make the Hill a better place to live, found itself June 19 with a $32,120 summer grant from Community Progress, Inc. (CPI), the local anti-poverty agency.

The grant came after a brief but sometimes bitter round of negotiations with CPI officials and Mayor Lee. HPA members feel that the grant was the mayor's response to a series of violent incidents in New Haven's black neighborhoods.

On June 18 CPI offered the HPA $4800 in response to its demand for $32,000. Following fire-bomb attacks on five CPI offices that night, HPA leaders were finally given the meeting they had been demanding with the mayor and given the $32,120. The grant is the first given by CPI to an independent neighborhood organization. It will be completely administered by the HPA.

Fred Harris, president of the Hill Parents, said that "I think the mayor gave us the money because a lot of things have been happening in the black community -- like what happened to the CPI offices, and windows have been broken in the Legion Ave. area and the Congress Ave. area.

"I think what he's doing is that he sees that not only in New Haven but all across the country outbreaks or rebellions have started at a very early date, and I think he sees now that the people in the black communities know there's no hope for them unless they show their anger. I think he has recognized the black people for once. It's just another tokenism gift, but I think he does recognize there is some kind of power."

Other HPA members agreed that the mayor gave the money to the HPA because he was afraid of violence in the black ghetto.

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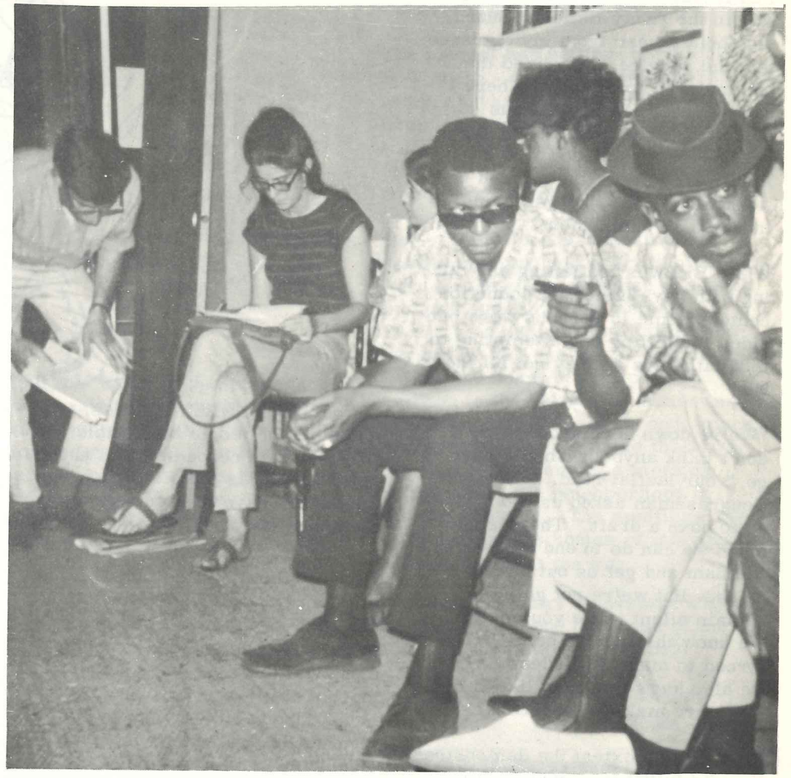

Teachers and administrators of the free day camp for children one part of HPA's summer project, meet in a planning session.

WE'RE TIRED OF BEING ALONE

By Jon Tower and Morty Miller

"I'm not too familiar with this thing -- I've always been on my own."

This statement sums up the feelings of a lot of guys when faced with the draft. It happens to have been made by Bill Howe, who refused induction at New Haven's Center on June 14.

Bill Howe, who's from Torrington, was in the Army National Guard. "In about a year from my entrance into the service, I realized that I had matured to the point where I had b ecome a conscientious objector." His request for discharge was turned down last April; and because he missed one weekend's drills, he was being inducted as punishment.

While Bill was leafletting and talking with guys inside the induction center, some 15 persons were outside, leafletting and attempting to talk with guys as they got off the bus.

"We're down here because we don't th_nk anybody should have to go," our leaflet read. "No Congressman asked us if we wanted to have a draft. There's not much we can do to end the war in Vietnam and get us out of this mess. But we're not going to remain silent while you go off. We know that you're being forced to make sacrifices. And we also know that men like Bill Howe are making sacrifices."

To a limited extent the demonstration did fulfill the purpose of manifesting our solidarity with Bill Howe and other objectors. We did get to talk with inductees; and a number of people inside told Bill that they respected him and agreed with his position, though they didn't have the courage to take the same stand.

We were dismayed by the fact that in effect our demonstration came too late: those guys were going on to the services and had accepted that inevitability. They hadn't thought about alternatives to going in, and we could only try to get them to think about why somebody else wasn't going.

The following Tuesday much the same group of men and women returned to the Federal Building to picket in support of Paul Buhle ("Paul Buhle, He's not your tool"), and to leaflet and talk with guys going in for their physicals.

"I have decided never to go into the Army because people should be fighting for more rights and more money at home, first," he said in the leaflet he passed out on his bus ride to the center from Willimantic.

"A month ago, I told my draft board: you can put me in jail, but I will never get into an Army uniform. Then I applied for Conscientious Objector's status (I-O) on the basis that America was fighting a wrong war and I couldn't go in and still believe I was a man."

This time our manifestation of solidarity was not so calmly received. The first busload of guys disembarked as if forewarned about us -- few accepted leaflets or talked with us.

As a second bus pulled up to the induction center and opened its doors, a uniformed man stepped in and told the men not to talk with us or accept our leaflets. "Close those windows," he shouted as we pushed leaflets through them, over

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the shouts of "you don't have to take orders -- you're not in the Army yet," from a girl from the Voluntown CNVA camp.

A third bus pulled into the private lot behind the center. Its windows were closed and we were told that the bus would not be allowed to unload until we'd left the lot.

At lunchtime we talked with guys as they stood around in the hallway of the center. As on the previous Wednesday, leaflets were accepted and read: very few were thrown away. What was surprising was guys' attitudes toward the armed services. People who get out on physical deferments were cheered and congratulated, while a short time ago physical rejects were looked down upon.

"Why don't you write a leaflet on how to get us out of the draft," one guy asked Paul, "instead of doing this demonstrating, which doesn't help us?"

Paul told some of the guys that he was making this protest at his physical, (and would later refuse induction and go to jail if he had to), because he didn't want just to get out himself. The war was wrong and the draft was wrong. He was working to end them. This was understood: one guy asked Paul what brand of cigarettes he smoked and offered to send him a carton in jail.

The group which supported these men is unsure of the effect of these expressions of solidarity, but they intend to support future refusers. In addition, we think one of the most important things we can do is talk with highschool students about the draft and alternatives to military service. We welcome anyone interested in working with us, as well as contributions towards the expense of literature.

We too are unfamiliar with this thing, but we're tired of being alone.

VIET CANVAS

By Ed Greer

Vietnam Summer in New Haven is one of AIM's newest projects. It represents an effort to involve as many people in the community as possible in ongoing grassroots education and organizing about Vietnam, and the steps necessary to end the war. Vietnam Summer needs the time and energy of as many AIM supporters as possible. Office workers and especially canvassers (evenings and weekends) are much in demand. Canvassers are given training in small seminar sessions. Call the office to volunteer (787-012?

The project has several complementary goals. Its organizational basis is the canvassing team, which enters a neighborhood and systematically canvasses its inhabitants. Initially, some 50 canvassers have commenced work. The householder is questioned as to his views on the war. The effort is to neutralize hostile opinion, win over ambivalent folk, and begin to organize presently isolated opposition elements.
Partly as a basis for initiating conversation, the canvasser attempts to induce the householder to sign a petition to the President demanding unconditional withdrawal; and, more significantly, to persuade those who are willing to come to a meeting scheduled in the neighborhood to discuss the war. The meetings are to be held at the homes of individuals concerned about the war.

At these meetings discussion will be focused around the issue of the war and the nature of political power in American society. The meetings will attempt to educate

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announcement

MEETING ON '68 ELECTIONS

Should there be a third party Presidential candidate in 1968?

A panel discussion will be held in the AIM Office on Wed., July 12 at 8:00 p.m. Participants in the panel will include Robert Cook and others

DIXWELL RENEWAL

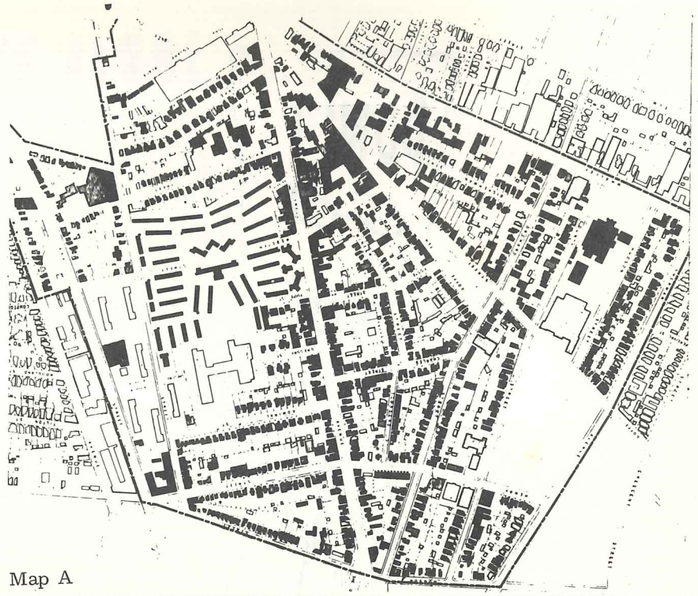
A CRITIQUE AND ALTERNATIVE

By Whit Smith and Tom Harmon

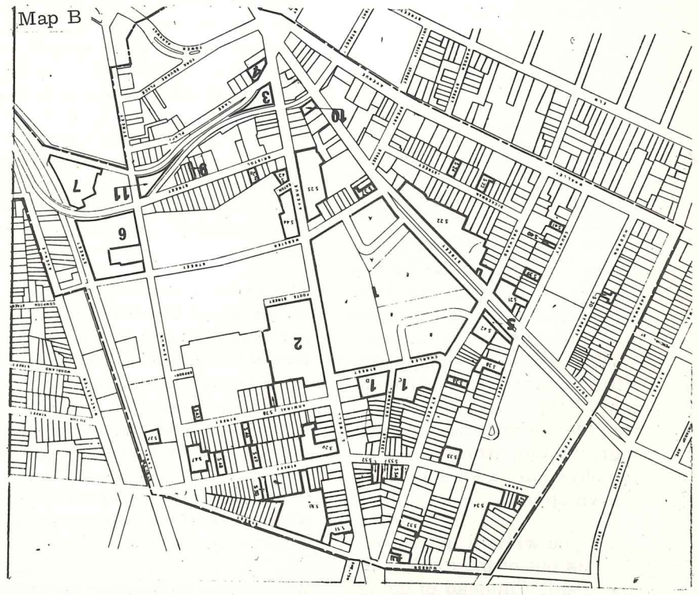
CRITIQUE

Although the Dixwell neighborhood renewal plan explicitly stated that there was much "worth saving" in Dixwell, and that clearance would be used only against "deteriorated residential and commercial structures," this standard was ignored; both standard and sub-standard structures were indescriminately razed. For example, in the block on which the northwest section of the new Florence Virtue moderate income housing project is located, 41 structures were razed, only 3 of which were designated as needing "extensive repair" on the City's Structural Conditions survey map. All the buildings razed for the Winter Garden moderate income housing project were in need of only "intermediate repair." For the new Dixwell Plaza commercial center 22 building were razed, none of which were in need of "extensive repair."

To us there seems to be no doubt that the program was one of removal of the poor. There was a net loss of 500 housing units in Dixwell, predominately low-cost housing. The lowest rents in the new projects, excluding housing for the elderly, begin at $91 and require a down payment of $325. This type of program is ridiculous because in 1960 52% of the residents of Dixwell were poverty-stricken, by Federal standards. City officials will tell you that the families relocated are housed better than they ever were before, but they neglect the fact that they are also paying higher rents. Thomas Appleby, former Development Administrator, and William Miller, Alderman of the 15th Ward, admit in their 1965 N. Y. Times article that the rents of their 100 so-called "typical" relocated families jumped by 5% of the family's annual income. Thus for people who can't afford or don't wish to pay higher rents, the Dixwell plan offers absolutely no alternatives. Their housing plight is compounded by the fact that, excepting housing for the elderly, no low cost public housing has been built in the city since the beginning of the Urban Renewal program in 1955 and that so far only 100 rent certificates have been issued.



Map A



Map B

Dixwell "before and after" urban renewal. Map "A" indicates an urban neighborhood with dense, varied, lively streets (note that only the bureaucratically planned Public Housing Project breaks the urban pattern). Map "B" shows Dixwell diagramatically cleaned up with a "center (numbers 1 & 2) and "edges" (Goffe "Boulevard", number 5, and a segment of the "Loop Road", numbers 3-11). Now only a few remaining city streets intrude into the suburbanized landscape of the new "University Park Dixwell" renewal area.

The planners did not find much worth saving in Dixwell. They did not like things like mixed land uses, high density residential areas, or people talking together on street corners. So they greatly lowered the housing density, separated functions into neat pockets, and planted a lot of grass and trees. The values which white middle-class planners imposed on a poor black community show a total disregard for the type of society which existed there. It appears that the planners sought not so much to save the city neighborhood as to suburbanize it.

The Dixwell plan reveals some basic assumptions of the national Urban Renewal Program. The program has concerned itself with physical aspects of the "slum" for which it has proposed purely physical changes. Planners have blatantly ignored the possibility that physical deterioration is merely a manifestation of deeper, more complex problems.

The problems of Dixwell in 1960 were overwhelmingly social and economic. Indeed, a good case can be made that in 1960, Dixwell was not a physical "slum"; only 71 of its 1,039 structures were by the City Planning Department's own criteria in need of "extensive repair" and the percentage of "deteriorating" buildings was less that 6% above the City average. Yet the planners talked in purely physical terms: "eliminate blighting influences," "reduce the number of substandard dwellings," etc. At its best, the program was largely irrelevant.

Planners simply do not ask essential questions: what is a "slum"? How can the syndrome of unemployment, high crime rates, etc., be broken? (Certainly not by renewing neighborhoods by moving poor people out of them or by allowing slum landlords to pay for bringing their buildings up to Code by raising the tenants' rents.) What's the difference between safe, lively, interesting urban spaces and dangerous ones? Planners must try to determine and realistically define the causes of our urban problems. Then and only then will they be able to envision a program that effectively deals with our cities as they really exist.

SOME ALTERNATE PROPOSALS

We feel strongly that there was much of considerable value and positive uniqueness in the Dixwell community of 1960 and that its character should not have been altered. The plan we have drawn up is for Dixwell as it existed seven years ago, before the present renewal program commenced. In keeping with our critique, our physical plan is basically a "conservative" one.

Only 71 buildings were in need of extensive repair. These structures and not one other should have been razed and the following facilities built:

1. A K-4 school quite like the new Helene Grant School.

2. A branch library on Dixwell Avenue that would fulfill a genuine community need still unmet by the City's renewal program. We would give it full frontage on the Avenue, because it was the real center of the Dixwell neighborhood - even if it was a street and not a "plaza."

3. An ice skating rink that converted to 4 or 5 basketball courts in warm weather. Such a facility would have brought people to Dixwell from all over the City and would have been a real asset to the neighborhood.

4. In the lower Canal Street area there was enough land available from undeveloped land and "extensive repair housing" clearance to provide a site for a children's zoo. Again it is a facility that the entire City would really use which would also be fun to have in the neighborhood. Sacrificing this precious land to future Yale expansion or to the "inner circumferential loop road" does little justice to the people who have rightful claim to its use.

5. There would also be green spaces the size of one or two building lots where "extensive repair" buildings had been located. These spaces would be developed mainly as "tot lots" where mothers could sit and talk, where children's play equipment would be provided. These would be spaced no more than one on a street. None would be on Dixwell Avenue, which could more productively serve the commercial needs of the neighborhood.

Finally, two large areas would be cleared and reserved for commercial use or small industry.

This plan reflects our effort to keep facilities effectively spread and serving the community on a decentralized basis. The only "center" the new Dixwell would have would be the same as the old one - the long, lively corridor of the Avenue itself.

In closing we would just like to reiterate our major point: government must offer poor people, black or white, a stake in our society; Urban Renewal has not done this. especially not in Dixwell.

The authors are Yale undergraduates who looked into Dixwell renewal not as professional "experts" but simply as thoughtful, rational men. Neither their critique nor alternative is meant to be a complete study, but rather subjective impressions. We feel their penetration of the "liberal" rhetoric that surrounds the renewal program is as concise and insightful as any we've seen, and are pleased to present it here. - The editors.

AIM Tennis Club

AIM is forming a tennis club to help tennis players find partners. Call the AIM office, 787-0123, with your name, phone number, time and days you can play, and the level of your skill (beginner, intermediate, advanced). A chart with information for each player will be posted in the AIM office. Simply check the chart to find a tennis partner.

hpa cont.

According to Bill Hobbs, the mayor approved the grant "so he can say he tried to do something. He ain't did nothing. It's just so he can say, when push comes to shove and anything happens, we tried. This is the model city, you see. This is his ace in the hole, this little bit of bread. This little bit of bread will keep him from losing face."

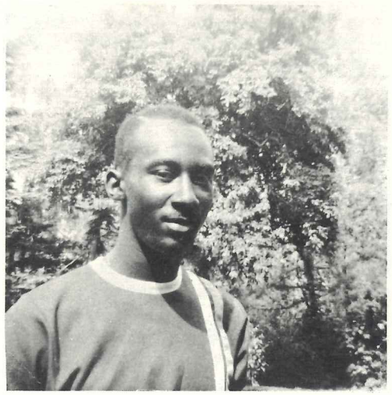
The Hill Parents will use most of the money to fund three 10-week programs: a summer camp for children, staff and maintenance for a park being constructed on a vacant lot on Congress Ave., and a school for neighborhood adults. In addition, a little over $5000 of the money will begin what may prove to be the most important new HPA venture: Operation Breakthrough.

Breakthrough is the brainchild of Curtis Belton, who has been working with the HPA since Fred Harris' AIM state assembly campaign last fall. He has been wrestling for a long time with the problem of the many black young men like himself who are unemployed. Operation Breakthrough is the result.

"The purpose of the program," according to Belton, "is to create jobs for the guys on the block who are unemployed. We sign contracts with landlords to fix up houses and get the guys off the block to do the work."

Breakthrough will also try to get jobs with the sanitation department, the state highway department, and any other government agencies or private firms. The major focus is on jobs that will fix up and clean up the Hill, but Breakthrough will send men anywhere. Anyone who has work they need done -- painting, gardening, plastering, or anything else -- may call the Operation Breakthrough office at 624-1183 or stop by at 763 Congress Ave.

"Most of these guys have some kind of trade," Belton says, "a little carpentry, a little experience painting, we even have a licensed plumber in the crew." Breakthrough may also so some training: for instance, an AIM member has offered to teach house wiring to some of the crews who will be rehabilitating apartments.



Curtis Belton heading up "Operation Breakthrough"

Operation Breakthrough's initial funding will hire Belton and Ronnie Johnson, a former president of the Hill Neighborhood Union, to get the program going this summer. It will also pay for a full-time secretary, office rent, and other expenses. Breakthrough plans to be an ongoing project, but new funds will be necessary in the fall.

The HPA summer programs were still being worked out as the newsletter went to press. At least 17 more jobs will be paid for out of the grant, as well as a lot of equipment -- such as typewriters and school supplies -- that the HPA can use in other programs after the summer. All the jobs will go to the Hill people.

The summer camp, which will be on borrowed land in Hamden, "is being set up by people from this community and run by people from this community," according to an HPA leaflet. "The program is run by qualified counselors with full safety measures."

Programs will include arts and crafts, games and sports, classes in black history, dancing, swimming, book hour, and field trips to places of cultural interest in Connecticut and New York, including Harlem, the U.N., etc."

Hot lunches will be served each day.

The adult school lists 25 class offerings, ranging from reading help and math to black civilization and dance. It includes architecture and construction work, typing and shorthand, Spanish, English for Spanish-speaking people, and health care and birth control. All teachers are volunteers; most of the money will go for equipment.

The third program, the park on Congress Ave., will begin to realize a long-time HPA dream. There is no park in the area which serves the many small children who live there, and as a result many children are hit by cars every summer while playing in the streets or trying to get to another playground farther away. HPA members will fix up the lot in cooperation with the Parks Department and Operation Breakthrough.

A major part of the summer funds will go to hire at least 13 neighborhood people, four to maintain the park and the rest to supervise it, day and evening, seven days a week.

HPA members feel unanimously that that the programs this money will fund can be done better by Hill Parents than by CPI. "I'm down here," Thomas Muskelly put it, "and I know more what is needed than somebody over there. I can tell them, but they can't feel it like I do because I'm here and they're still there."

Tyrone Pulley, who will cook for the summer camp, emphasized that the mayor "thinks this money he's give us is going to keep us off his back. It's not. This money does mean a lot. It means we have something to work on to help our kids, to help our black brothers and sisters in the community. But as long as the devil is treating us like he is, putting us under him, then we're going to fight for equal rights."

Curtis Belton summed up: "If the mayor's trying to keep the HPA quiet, he's in a world of trouble. I don't think nobody could buy the HPA off, with no kind of money."

NEW HAVEN POLITICS

By Dave Murrary and Rich Beth

PART III: WHAT COULD BE DONE

In the last two articles we have given a picture of New Haven government and politics. We have said that city government works by negotiation and compromise among groups that have political power. We have said that parties are networks of mutual favors and loyalty which operate as ways of organizing power.

The problem is that the system does not operate to give the citizens influence over the government, but instead responds only to political power. The question for a group such as AIM is how the system might be used, to make the party fulfill its job of organizing the power of the people.

WARD COMMITTEES

The Ward committees are the basic supports of the system. If they could be controlled by the citizens they could serve as centers of organizing popular influence. This would mean, first, regular elections to the Ward Committees, rather than only primaries when a group of insurgent rebels demand them. Also, the members should be elected from neighborhoods, where they would be known, rather than from the Ward at large. If this were done, the people would have more effective control over the choice of a Ward Leader and a delegate to the Town Committee.

However, free elections alone will accomplish nothing, if only the party politicians are involved in party affairs. The Ward Committee should serve as a center for activities to increase the influence and involvement of the people: for example, Ward discussion groups, Ward hearings, and Ward projects.

ORGANIZING INFLUENCE

People can become more effective politically if they have more information. Ward discussion groups would be designed to provide it. Such groups could study the way the city is run. These should be continuous, and designed to draw people into some standing connection with political activity.

Ward hearings should be held, down to the neighborhood level, to allow people to hear and question public figures and find out what the city was planning and what it was doing that affected them. Such hearings would also allow the leaders to find out what people were concerned about and what they wanted done. Thus the people would be able to gain the information necessary for political activity, and also to affect the decision process.

When people become interested in a community problem, they could then form a project, similar to AIM projects, to do something about it. The people could take the initiative in drawing up a plan for action, and receive funds and cooperation from the city to carry out the plan on a neighborhood basis.

The goal of all these ideas is to create ways for the people to be involved in political life at all times. If citizens maintain a continuing interest in and understanding of city affairs, it will be harder for the city to get away with just an occasional public hearing before tearing down the neighborhood.

GAINING POWER

But it is not enough for people to be able to talk with leaders. If the people really controlled the parties, the parties would be able to give people control in the government. If the citizens controlled a Ward Committee, they could nominate their own choice for Alderman, rather than accepting the choice of the party hacks. If the people controlled political power, the political leaders would have to listen to their desires and pay attention to their ideas.

Of course this is easier said than done in the current system. There is nothing the politicians want less than control by people outside the political system, which only reduces their own power. Therefore, the system is set up so that it is hard to get into, and hard to organize democratic power in. The job is more difficult still, because most people do not want to spend large amounts of time on politics.

AIM picnic June 10 drew a large crowd to enjoy the sun, food and conversation.

Still, only through popular activity can popular control of the government be achieved. In order to build popular organization, therefore, there should be not only political events, but party dinners, dances, and other social events. As with the PTA today, a network of friendship and communication would form and when an issue came up, the people and the organization would be ready to take part in its solution.

Our plan will not stop political decisions from being made by negotiation and compromise through political parties. These things seem to be necessary in democratic politics. But if our ultimate aim is to change New Haven, to make it a better place for human beings, then we must discover how we can gain the power to make those changes. That power, in the current system lies with the government. Therefore, the crucial question is how the democratic power of the people can be made effective in the government.

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those present on the issue of Vietnam and the reality of their powerlessness in our society, to suggest the necessity of their organizing themselves as an independent political constituency dedicated to creating the political leverage necessary to force an end to the war, and to recruit canvassers.

Each neighborhood will be organized on the basis of the political wards in New Haven, building on the already existing structural remnants of AIM's congressional campaign. And every effort will be made to provide these neighborhood groups with a sense of a long-range perspective of action by relating the issue of Vietnam to local concerns and local electoral politics.

As Vietnam Summer ends, the fruits of its work will not disintegrate as usually occurs with "single issue" organizing campaigns, important as this single issue is, but will represent a preparatory step toward such future projects as running AIM candidates for city Aldermanic posts.

Vietnam Summer in New Haven can therefore be most broadly understood as a method of educating and organizing the people of our community as to the desirability and prospects of fundamental social change. As this process continues, and as we educate ourselves more thoroughly to the thinking of our fellow citizens and how power is institutionally organized in America, we begin to represent a genuine threat to those who presently wield it. The conscious creation of this threat is the instrument by which we as Americans can best end the barbaric war waged in our name but without our consent.